DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 115 650 SP 009 722

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TITLE The Teaching of the History of Physical Education and Sport in the United States and in Canada.
PUB DATE 75
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS *Athletics; *College Majors; Course Descriptions; Higher Education; History; *History Instruction; *Physical Education

ABSTRACT

Twenty-seven universities were surveyed to determine types of programs, approaches, problems, and solutions in teaching the history of physical education and sport. All those that responded (23) indicated that they had at least one course in this field. Both elective and required undergraduate and graduate courses were offered at different institutions. Courses were usually three hours per week for one semester, and the normal format was the lecture, often with visual aids. Problems identified included overly large classes, insufficient time to cover the subject, lack of qualified faculty and appropriate texts, and student unfamiliarity with history. Recommendations to improve classes included provision of greater curriculum balance, with more attention to humanities; more emphasis on history; and greater involvement of historical organizations in taking on projects such as producing visual aids. Suggested innovative techniques included having students give mini-papers, going to museums, talking about current events, and using reproduced prints of primary sources. Beginning level classes focused on an understanding and appreciation of sport, while upper level classes dealt with the role of sport in society, and graduate classes stressed methods of historical research. (CD)

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THE TEACHING OF THE HISTORY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT IN THE UNITED STATES AND IN CANADA

Marvin H. Eyler

INTRODUCTION

When I was invited to share this platform with Professors Vroede and Bernett to give an overview of the status of the teaching of the history of physical education and sport in institutions of higher learning in the United States, I became concerned, because a number of universities in Canada are also teaching such courses. And since my paper on this panel was the only one to represent this question in North America, I felt that it would be advisable to enlarge the original assignment to include institutions of higher learning in Canada as well as in the United States. I am indebted to Dr. Michael Salter, Professor at the University of Windsor, for his kindness in sending me a copy of Gary Bowie and Mike Salter's[1] Sport History, Canada, an as yet unpublished survey of sport history courses offered by selected Canadian universities in 1973-74. Since there had been no comparable studies done in the United States, I made a survey involving twenty-seven universities. I do not claim that what was gleaned from the responses can be said to hold throughout the country, but it does give us some insight into the

[1] Gary Bowie and Michael Salter, Sport History, Canada, New London, University of Western Ontario, unpublished M.S. 1974.

kinds of programs that are currently being carried on, their approaches to the subject, their problems and some solutions.

Faculty members in twenty-three of the twenty-seven universities responded to the following four questions: (1) Please cite the number and title of courses pertaining to the history of physical education and sport taught at your university. (2) What methods of teaching are you using? (3) What problems do you encounter in teaching such courses? (4) What recommendations can you suggest for solutions to these problems?

Courses Reported

Each university had at least one course, either required or elective at the undergraduate level, in the general field of the history of physical education and sport. One of the universities had as many as eight courses in various combinations, from introductory survey courses all the way to graduate seminars.

It is difficult to become specific when analyzing levels of courses, for there was a variety of offerings at the universities responding. For example, some institutions offered only elective courses, some offered both elective and required, some offered courses only at the undergraduate level, others combined undergraduate and graduate courses. Besides, some universities offered courses only at the master's level, others at the master's and doctoral levels.

In duration the courses varied, but not extensively. A course was either a two- or three-hour course lasting for a semester or a two- or three-hour course lasting for a quarter. Usually the class met for three one-hour sessions or for one three-hour session. In Canada, according to Bowie and Salter,[2] ten of the universities responding offered courses lasting for thirteen weeks. In the United States, there were some courses at the graduate level which ran for a full academic year from early September to the following May. Of those universities studied, 17, i.e., 77%, had graduate courses. Of these seventeen, 12, i.e., 70%, had approved areas of specialization at the M.A. level and 7, i.e., 41%, at the Ph.D. level.

There did not appear to be any pattern between required and elective courses at any particular level. In some institutions a required course was offered at the freshman level. At other institutions the faculty felt that the first year was much too soon, because students were still immature and had little or no background in history. Many faculty preferred such courses at the upper division level.

In discussing methods used in the presentation of materials, the use of a particular method was dependent upon the level of the course, the purpose of the course, and the size of the class. Most of the beginning (either required or elective) courses in the history of physical education and sport were taught by lecture with some visual aids: slides, overheads, or film strips. Some interesting teaching aids used to enrich

[2] Ibid, p. 4.

the lecture method will be mentioned later. There was some evidence of illustrated lectures in courses at the graduate level. Besides, there was much evidence of "reading courses" and the usual final course at the graduate level called "a seminar."

As one could well expect, the purposes of the courses differed greatly, according to their levels. But to generalize a bit, the most frequently identified purpose of lower division courses was to develop knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of physical education and sport in society. A second purpose often cited in the upper division courses was to show the functions of sport in society and the relationships between sport and other social institutions. At the graduate level, the purpose was to develop an appreciation for and an understanding of historical research and finally to have the students do historical research. Another worthy objective was to show the potential for historical research in the study of physical education and sport. In some universities courses were designed to go into great depth in a limited time. Other universities offered courses focused on topics such as the "History of School and College Sport," "The History of American Sport," "The History of Canadian Sport," "Sport In Society," and "Sport and Social Change." All the courses identified in the responses indicated that the objectives had been written out.

PROBLEMS

What were some of the problems identified? Insufficient time was the most frequently identified problem in the teaching of the history of physical education and sport. Whereas there should be three or four three-hour courses to cover the subject matter, it was usually jammed into one three-hour course. Another frequently identified problem was that of large classes, particularly in required courses. Another problem was a lack of qualified faculty, qualified both in terms of formal education and of interest. Still other problems hinged on the nature of a course related to when it was offered: i.e., the undergraduate students were either uninterested or unequipped with a knowledge of history. This last problem is understandable, because physical education faculties have tipped the scale in undergraduate requirements in favor of the sciences. My opinion is that the undergraduate requirements ought to strike a balance between the sciences and the humanities. Other problems were the lack of appropriate texts and source materials and a too high teacher-student ratio. To the universities which were not located near large bibliographical resources, the lack of such resources was a serious limitation. A need was cited for more and better interpretive articles and books.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

What are some possible solutions to the problems identified? One must assume that those who are called upon to teach the history of

physical education and sport have been trained in the history of the periods and topics and, therefore, are competent. One must further assume that they are interested in the subject matter and will try to perfect its presentation. One must also assume that there are available sufficient textual materials, even though some of them are not always satisfactory for a particular course.

More bridges should be built between the departments of physical education and the departments of history. Each major program should have at least two, preferably three, faculty members qualified in the history of physical education and sport if they are to cover the subject matter thoroughly. (It is interesting to note in this regard that the University of Western Ontario has six faculty members qualified in the historical/comparative/cultural/anthropological approaches to physical education and sport.) Their expertise cannot be communicated in a single three-hour course, whether graduate or undergraduate.

Some suggestions were made regarding curriculum balance. They generally involved attempts at convincing curricula committees to give more attention to the humanities. In other words, some feel that for too long we have sensitized our students to requirements in the pure and applied sciences to the neglect of the humanities. To be more specific, we are spending an inproportionate amount of time providing a base for kinesiology, motor learning, and exercise physiology. We should provide a similar base for the history of our discipline.

Another suggestion was that the history organizations such as HISPA and NASSH should take on scholarly projects, one of which could be the production of slides or transparencies, for there is a need for good audiovisual aids in our field. For example, film strips or slides could be made on colonial sport, perhaps at Williamsburg, or, since there are numerous relevant pictures in the Archives in Washington, D. C., on nineteenth-century America, strips that would enrich our knowledge of the period.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

A variation of the usual three one-hour lectures was one suggesting Fridays as a time when the class would be divided into several groups, at each of which a minipaper would be presented by a student, a copy of the paper to be distributed to all members of the group at the time of presentation. Another suggestion to enrich the teaching was visits to such places as Greenfield Village and the Henry Ford Museum. Museum professionals are usually cooperative: they want to share both their facilities and their expertise. They can provide a real living experience for students investigating the history of sport.

One university reported another innovative idea involving the reproduction of facsimile prints of primary sources to enable undergraduates to work with primary sources and to provide their own interpretation of the meaning of those primary sources. Another idea for enrichment suggested the frequent use of well-known sportsmen. All the innovative

approaches carried a built-in problem - that of cost. Reference here is made to the beneficial effects of travel-study courses where the instructor has the advantage of giving on-sight lectures.

Bruce Bennett, of Ohio State University, has long been working on the problem of arousing interest in our heritage and attempting to reduce lecturing to a minimum. Earlier he reported at the first NASSH International Conference[3] some suggestions concerning how interest could be aroused. One of the suggestions was to use the first five minutes of each class for a discussion of a current event. Another suggestion called for a ten- or fifteen-minute discussion once a week on an important sport figure. Another recommended the use of visiting speakers on historical topics.

Still other ideas came from Professor Russ Sturzebecker of West Chester. He has had success in attempting to reconstruct sporting gear and relating it to methods of play and to rules. He has also been able to demonstrate older games by recreating costumes, equipment, etc. This effort is quite time consuming, but it is effective. In addition, he has introduced "school weeks," such as "Greco-Roman Week", "Medieval Festivals," and "Sports in the Colonies." This technique helps make history come alive.

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[3]Bruce Bennett, "The Teaching of the History of Physical Education and Sport. Is It Possible," Proceedings, NASSH, 1973 p. 38-39.

Some universities reported trying to avoid the purely chronological narrative approach to the teaching of the history of physical education and sport. Instead, they used every possible instance to relate the history of physical education and sport to the political or to the social or to the economic environment in which it flourished. One university reported particular success with discussion groups using questions which had been raised in Patterson and Hallberg's[4] text. This same institution reported success in re-enactments of past activities as well as in using reproduced primary sources for analysis.

In summary, the universities studied show differing efforts with some commonalities in sport history. All have problems for which some solutions are available. As more persons are trained in this field, methods will be refined so that the subject will increasingly win the recognition which it deserves.

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[4] Ann Patterson and Edmund C. Hallberg, Background Readings for Physical Education, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965.

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